

Unbundling the News – the 27-cent solution

May 22, 2015

The Background

- **Winnipeg Free Press was the only big-city daily in Canada without a paid digital strategy**
- **Not part of larger publishing company so we had no corporate plan to follow**
- **We had traditionally good print penetration, but erosion was accelerating**
- **We knew we had to get new revenues from readers**

The Dilemma

- **How to take advantage of our latecomer status to paid digital**
- **Paid digital strategies at papers that look like us usually have limited success**
- **They capture some revenue, but mostly from a narrow group of high-frequency users**
- **It's akin to selling printed newspapers by subscription only, with no single copy sales**

The Method

- **Set up committee of senior managers with authority to get things done**
- **Realize this committee will never get anything done**
- **Set up subcommittee of young non-managers and digital people**
- **Give them ownership of the project, support but don't interfere**

The Thinking


- This group designed a payment method based on the way they and their friends pay for things online
- Web natives won't commit to subscriptions, but buy in bits and pieces – think music, apps, games
- Web natives want what they want and they want it now
- Digital has unbundled newspapers in every way possible, so why not unbundle articles from the news package?

The Model

- **Design a system that captures all users of Free Press content**
- **Give frequent users a subscription option**
- **Charge 27 cents per article to casual users**
- **Make every reader's experience unique with personalization based on daily use, habits and tastes**

The Result

TOP NEWS	City audit into over-budget Waverley West roads project fails to find source of...
MOST POPULAR	Jury sequestered in case of teen accused of second-degree murder
MOST COMMENTED	Doug Speirs lists the Top Five Bad Movie Moms for this Mother's Day
MY NEWS	'Freeman on the Land' gets another shot at freedom after breaching bail order
	Andrew Ladd's surgery for sports hernia successful

 Winnipeg Free Press | @WinnipegNews
May 8 3:40 pm

Andrew Ladd's surgery for sports hernia successful
wfp.to/MC8

Winnipeg Free Press



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WINNIPEG JETS



Andrew Ladd's surgery for sports hernia successful

3:32 PM 0 27c

LOCAL



Ex-NDP staffers receive \$670,000 in severance

May 7th 7:29 PM 1 27c

Advertisement

BONUS DEADLINE: MIDNIGHT TONIGHT


Choose a once-in-a-lifetime trip or take **\$25,000 CASH**

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

WEATHER

Winnipeg MB 3°, Overcast

THIS EVENING: ☁️ 3°C CLOUDY PERIODS



TONIGHT: 🌧️ -2°C VARIABLE CLOUDINESS

FULL FORECAST

BUSINESS

MUSIC

HOMES

➤ My News. My Way. New responsive website launched in May 2015

The Result

- Content was enhanced, new editorial staff added



The Result

- All users must create accounts and log in. We now have 110,000 registered users

My News

RECENTLY READ

1 UPDATED

Demi Moore has clothes stolen

1:15 PM 0 0 27c

Better times still ahead even after Canada drops nearly 20,000 jobs: economists

3:45 PM 0 0 27c

Go north for a happy life

1:30 PM 0 0 27c

Crooked Brothers, IsKwé to headline Back 40 Festival

12:01 PM 0 0 27c

The intelligence is artificial; the questions are real

10:09 AM 0 0 27c

Milla Jovovich co-sleeps with family

May 7th 7:15 AM 0 0 27c

Elton John pleased with princess name

May 7th 1:15 PM 0 0 27c

Racism focus of Sinclair suit

May 6th 6:44 AM 117 0 27c

READ LATER

Lord Selkirk Park rebuilds community

8:44 AM 7 0 27c

More than a gift shop

May 7th 8:34 AM 3 0 27c

Joss Whedon quit Twitter because it is addictive

May 6th 1:15 PM 0 0 27c

Tressed for success: The role of wild-maned 'super-Jew' was a lock for local actress

May 7th 12:26 PM 0 0 27c

Conservatives apologize for video of PM's visit to Iraq and Kuwait that revealed faces of soldiers

May 5th 4:03 PM 34 0 27c

Canadian government to seek emergency stay of bail for Omar Khadr

May 3rd 10:52 PM 30 0 27c

Guessing game heats up over name of Britain's new princess, who spent 1st night at home

May 3rd 11:53 AM 1 0 27c

MY NEWS

RECENTLY READ (1 UPDATED)

Demi Moore has clothes stolen

1:15 PM

Better times still ahead even after Canada drops nearly 20,000 jobs: economists

3:45 PM

Go north for a happy life

1:30 PM

READ LATER

Lord Selkirk Park rebuilds community

8:44 AM

More than a gift shop

May 7th 8:34 AM

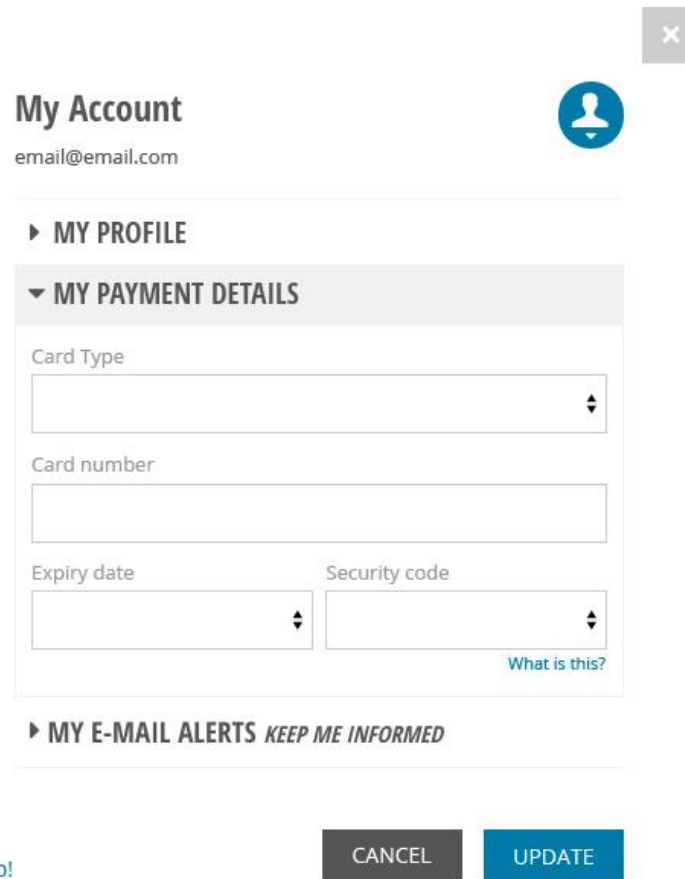
Joss Whedon quit Twitter because it is addictive

May 6th 1:15 PM

SEE ALL

The Result

- To read articles, casual users must register credit cards. Charges are totaled and levied monthly



The screenshot shows a user account interface. At the top, it says 'My Account' with the email 'email@email.com' and a profile icon. Below this, there are sections for 'MY PROFILE', 'MY PAYMENT DETAILS', and 'MY E-MAIL ALERTS'. The 'MY PAYMENT DETAILS' section is expanded and contains the following fields:

- Card Type: A dropdown menu.
- Card number: A text input field.
- Expiry date: A dropdown menu.
- Security code: A text input field with a 'What is this?' link below it.

At the bottom of the form, there are two buttons: 'CANCEL' and 'UPDATE'. A 'Help!' link is also visible.

The Result

- The amount spent is always displayed. Readers can ask for refunds if the article is unsatisfactory

Refund

Why?

- Too short
- Too long
- Not what I expected/title misleading
- Not enough value
- Clicked accidentally

Other

CANCEL

SUBMIT

The Result

My Account

cpanson@gmail.com



▼ MY PROFILE

YOU'RE A SUBSCRIBER! ✓

Commenting Display Name

CPanson

First Name

Christian

Last Name

Panson

Birth Day

13

Birth Month

April

Birth Year

1970

Address

688 Beecher

City

Winnipeg

Province/State

Manitoba

Postal/Zip Code

R2V4P9

Country

Canada

Mobile Phone

2049188757

Home Phone

2043339566

Account # or Activation Key

Looking for subscription information? [Click Here!](#)

▶ MY E-MAIL ALERTS *KEEP ME INFORMED*

- Online accounts are linked to print subscriptions to avoid charging loyal subscribers for digital content

[Help!](#)

CONTINUE

Winnipeg Free Press

The Reaction

- **Some blowback from the “everything online should be free” crowd**
- **Large volume of users needed help to register and link to their subscriptions; customer support had to be “unbundled” from print schedule**
- **More to come**